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Title: Family, Food, Nation, and Economy: Attachment to China and the Return (or Not) of Chinese Graduate Students in the Sciences and Engineering

About the Author: 2008-05-02 11:54 PM: I struggle to conjure up characteristics about me that might impinge on this project. Naive as it may be, I don't feel as if my characteristics came to bear on this project as much as others that lie closer to my own interests. That said, I was fascinated by what our research participants had to say, which is perhaps the most important characteristic of all to have. One important point to make clear is a characteristic that I lack -- Chinese language skills of any sort. It is possible that I may have been able to produce more intimate knowledge from my interviews if I had some Chinese language skills. However, I do feel that my research participants felt comfortable with me and my questions, and for that I am grateful.

Keywords: China, globalization, graduate students, science, engineering, brain drain, family, food, nation, economy, pleasure

Abstract: For our project we sought to identify the meanings that male graduate students in the sciences and engineering mobilize when making plans for after they graduate. We conducted eight interviews and found that these students considered aspects such as family, food, nation, and economy when formulating their future plans. In particular, it appears that, now that China's economy is more similar to that of the United States, these students are allowed to reconsider values they have long held but were unable to make their priority. Furthermore, it also appears that there may be two groups among male graduate students in the sciences and engineering, if not graduate students in general -- those who return to China because they are attached to it and those who stay in the United States because they are not.

Response Paper #1: Response Paper #1

Duggan, Lisa. 2003. The Twilight of Equality: Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics and the Attack on Democracy.

Giroux, Henry. 2005. The Terror of Neoliberalism: Rethinking the Significance of Cultural Politics.

Phoenix, Ann. 2004. Neoliberalism and Masculinity: Racialisation and the Contradictions of Schooling and for 11-14 Year Olds.

Reminiscent of Marxian debates around base and superstructure, the central argument that situates Duggan (2003:3) is that disturbances in neoliberalism have opened up opportunities for change by progressive-leftist politics, "but it will not be possible to seize these opportunities without a broad understanding of the neoliberal project – and this understanding will be blocked as long as leftists

and campaigners for economic justice dismiss cultural and identity politics as marginal, trivial, or divisive." Thus, to succeed against neoliberalism, Duggan argues that class politics and identity politics must be combined.

In support of her argument Duggan (2003:12) discerns the ways in which neoliberal economic policies belie its proponents' pretensions to cultural neutrality, asserting, "neoliberalism in fact has a cultural politics." For example, while "the Democratic effort to 'end welfare as we know it' did mask the race- and gender- specific operations of the policy change with neutral goals like promoting 'self-esteem' and 'empowerment' through work 'opportunity' … the actual policies of the legislation … expose its underlying assumption [that] the sexual practices and household structure of poor women, especially black women, are the central causes of poverty and of associated social disorder and criminality" (Duggan 2003:16). Along the same lines, Duggan also provides a detailed overview of the way in which criticism of a conference by the Women's Studies Program at the State University of New York (SUNY) at New Paltz, titled "Revolting Behavior: The Challenges of Women's Sexual Freedom," was subject to a dual attack, on both the grounds of its objectionable content as well as its seeming misuse of public funds.

Giroux (2005:3) expands on Duggan's call for a combined class and identity politics, and argues that democracy must not limit itself to "the struggle over economic resources and power" but must also include "the creation of public spheres where individuals can be educated as political agents equipped with the skills, capacities, and knowledge they need to perform as autonomous political agents." However, for me, the most pressing point that Giroux (2005:7) makes, especially in light of this class, is that "neoliberalism has been particularly hard on young people," where "youth of color fare considerably worse than white youth," and those youth who do manage to go to college "are often saddled with enormous debt once they graduate."

Finally, Phoenix (2004) argues that neoliberally influenced education policies in London that seek to treat deficits among boys in comparison with girls are misguided in their focus on individuals. In support of this argument Phoenix shows how boys are often torn between, on the one hand, the goal of succeeding in an academic environment as a means of securing one's future, and, on the other hand, the goal of successfully performing an "anti-swot culture" masculinity that "is defined as being about hardness, aggressiveness, confrontation, and hierarchical power relationships and that it is racialized" (Phoenix 2004:233).

There is a way in which Duggan's piece leaves me dispassionate and unmoved, to the extent that I struggled over whether or not I should, or would be able to, respond to this set of readings. I am unable to say exactly why this is the case, but I can say that I am more interested in her analysis of neoliberalism rather than her call to arms against it, which I find problematic, possibly providing the

answer to my disposition that I am looking for, even as much as I personally align myself with progressive-liberal politics and identify as a Democratic Socialist. As I search for a way to understand my response, one moment that comes to mind is the explosion in recent times of a concern with representation in the media. While I am in support of political actions associated with this issue, there is a way in which they are perpetually dissatisfying, because of the way they appear to both play into the creation of new markets for capitalism (I am reminded here of Jameson's observation on capitalism's voracious appetite and uncanny ability to absorb all cultures – even those that claim to resist it) while leaving the structure of capitalism in place unharmed. Thus, in my admittedly limited experience, it appears that it is not only those who are engaged in class politics that avoid identity politics, but also that those who are engaged in identity politics avoid class politics. Besides, isn't it likely the case that, just like neoliberalism's false claims to cultural neutrality, class politics of any sort are always already also involved in an identify politics as well, however obscured?

That said, I do find it analytically and politically productive to have access to the ways and workings of neoliberalism, especially as they relate to poor black women in Duggan and all youth, but primarily black youth, in Giroux. This shows both how much there is to gain by drawing out the connections between neoliberalism and its effects, and how we must be vigilant against neoliberalism's claims to naturalness and neutrality. However, one crucial aspect that appears to be missing from this set of readings, which is hopefully not absent from the debate around neoliberalism more generally, is a focused engagement with the motivations that encourage individuals to gleefully participate in and accept neoliberalism, though Duggan (2003:37-38) does treat this on some level where she argues that consumer/homeowner support of tax relief benefits for business and downsizing of government were predicated on the politics and cultures of race. Another question attention to the motivations behind individual support of neoliberalism raises regards the ways in which a broad Western promotion of individualism serves to promote neoliberalism, as well as a concern with the possible inherent pleasurability of "intrinsic" individual motivation vis-à-vis "extrinsic" collectivist motivation.

Furthermore, in showing how neoliberal values can be distributed in far-flung places to exert influence in contexts many would not predict, Phoenix keeps alive Foucault's assertion that "power is everywhere" and that, because this is the case, resistance can and must also be found everywhere.

Response Paper #2:

Response Paper #2

Cho, Hee-yeon. 2000. The Structure of the South Korean Developmental Regime and Its Transformation -- Statist Mobilization and Authoritarian Integration in the Anticommunist Regimentation. Inter-Asia Cultural Studies 1(3): (selection) 410-413.

Gordon, Andrew. 1998. Managing Society for Business. The Wages of Affluence: Labor and Management in Postwar Japan. Harvard University Press. 174-194.

Nelson, Laura C. 2006. South Korean Consumer Nationalism: Women, Children, Credit, and Other Perils. In Sheldon Garon and Patricia L. Maclachlan, eds. The Ambivalent Consumer: Questioning Consumption in East Asia and the West. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press. Pp. 188-208.

Uno, Kathleen. 1993. The Death of "Good Wife, Wise Mother." Post War Japan as History. Andrew Gordon, ed. Berkeley: University of California Press. 293-324.

The Power of Consumption

Under many conceptualizations of neoliberalism an erasure of the neoliberal subject's agency takes place. Subjected to the influence of capitalism and the state, their lack of agency and inability to resist is often taken as a given. However, if we focus on their consumption practices, then the neoliberal subject does not appear to be so powerless. In this paper I argue that by focusing on the public's consumption practices it is possible to highlight the way in which the public holds and wields their influence.

Consumption Practices in Korea and Japan

The most visible point of engagement with practices of consumption in this week's readings is in Nelson (2006). As Nelson (2006:188) says, "In the context of industrial development, changes in consumption (both as practice and as a domain of discourse) illuminate the struggles among state, business, and personal domains and forms of power." Under the Park administration, which was in place from 1960 to 1980, there was an emphasis on frugality, which "echoed similar discourses in Japan" (Nelson 2006:192). As South Korea began to prosper, such that poverty was not shared by all (Nelson 2006:196), however, anti-*kwasobi* (excessive consumption) movements came to critique women (Nelson 2006:196) and children (Nelson 2006:198), with men garnering little criticism (Nelson 2006:197). More recently, South Korea has become involved in a credit crisis (Nelson 2006:203). On the basis of these events, Nelson (2006:207) argues, "South Korea's economic miracle, so often seen as a miracle of industrial development and export success, is founded upon a nation of self-conscious consumers."

Consumption also a plays a role, however brief, in Cho (2000:409), who focuses on "the interaction between the market and the state" in South Korea's transition from an authoritarian developmental regime to a democratic neo-developmental regime. Cho (2000:413) explains how "the developmental regime was based on anticommunist regimentation," where "anticommunism formed a kind of social

basis for the South Korean developmental regime." After the "breakdown of the communist bloc" (Cho 2000:419), though, anticommunist regimentation lost some of its legitimacy. However, Cho (2000:419) argues "people's voluntary accommodation to capitalism, including cultural incorporation of people by consumerism, took in part the role of the former anticommunist regimentation."

Shifting to Japan, Gordon (1998:194) details how the "corporate-centered society" faced many challenges, yet "was gyroscopic, capable of withstanding, co-opting, or deflecting a range of challenges and righting itself." Drawing on the growth of "workplace activism and union militance" in Europe and North America during the late 1960s and 1970s, some Japanese youth "spoke of 'escaping from salary' and rejecting the company-centered work ethic of their fathers" (Gordon 1998:174). However, the corporate-centered society prevailed, and notions about competition and gender roles took hold (Gordon 1998:175). In turn, consumerism reduced interest in unions and chained workers to the corporations they worked for, since they needed the money from their jobs to purchase consumer goods (Gordon 1998:182). Hope for resistance arose yet again in the late 1980s and early 1990s with the appearance of the youthful *shinjinrui* (aliens), who "were choosing freelance work for high hourly wages rather than entering the oppressive hierarchies of large companies" (Gordon 1998:193). Yet, the lack of solidarity among this new breed of subject posed little threat to the corporate-centered society.

Finally, Uno (1993) traces the intricate genealogy of *ryōsai kenbo* ("good wife, wise mother") in Japan. Uno's (1993:303) central argument is this: "The term *ryōsai kenbo* itself fell into disuse after 1945, but the conservative ruling party, (the Liberal Democratic Party [LDP]) and private companies continued to formulate policies which assumed that wifehood and motherhood came first for women." For my purposes, however, and central to my own argument, I am struck by Uno's (1993:308) discussion of how "in later postwar consumer movements, women pressured manufacturers to lower prices and to provide safer, higher quality goods."

Discussion

Amidst these exchanges between business, the state, and the consumer, a curious moment emerges. Nelson (2006) reveals the ways in which concerns with consumption have laid at the heart of South Korean nationalist projects. In turn, Cho (2000) shows that consumerism came to replace the waning strength of anti-communism. In Japan, Gordon (1998) points to the symbiotic relationship between the corporate-centered society and consumerism. Finally, also in Japan, Uno (1993) notes that women formed consumer movements to exert influence on corporations.

Thus, alongside the typical agents that are considered, such as business and the state, it is important to consider the practices of consumers as the other side of

the equation that is formed by these entities. In doing this we enhance our analytical acumen in such a way that it allows us to better see how neoliberalism proceeds only by producing incentives that consumers deem worthy.

Conclusion

When considering the life of the neoliberal subject, we must be careful to discern and articulate the multiple points at which influence lies. Although the neoliberal moment, made up of the twin heads of commerce and government, is an extremely powerful force, we must take care not to strip the neoliberal subject of their own often equally powerful force of consumption, and should instead view it as its own act of agency rather than a simple epiphenomenon of neoliberalism. Indeed, given the will to pleasure that appears to animate the neoliberal subject, the nexus of consumption may be the most potent and productive point of resistance, similar to the use of boycotts in the past, such that the spark of revolt may lie in interpreting ourselves as consumers as well as workers.

Response Paper #3:

Response Paper #3

Driscoll, Mark. 2007. "Debt and Denunciation in Post-Bubble Japan: On the Two Freeters." Cultural Critique 65: 164-87.

Genda,Yuji. 2005. A Nagging Sense of Job Insecurity: the New Reality Facing Japanese Youth. Tokyo: International House of Japan. Pp. 29-50 (Chapter 2).

Lukacs, Gabriella. Forthcoming. Labor Fantasies in Recessionary Japan: Workplace Dramas, Social Realism, and Employment as Lifestyle. In Ann Anagnost, Andrea Arai, Brian Hammer, and Ren Hai, eds. Global Futures in East Asia.

Will the Real Freeter Please Stand Up?
Or, A Tale of Two Freeters,
Or, Can the Freeter Speak?

What, pray tell, is a freeter? According to some representations, the freeter is a Japanese daredevil of sorts, leaping through life on the backs of part-time jobs without ever settling in one place, all the while baring a sneer in the direction of the corporations that would stifle their individuality. Yet, there are others who question such a cheerful depiction, given the difficulties that youth in Japan face in even getting a job to begin with. Thus, the freeter appears to be Janus-faced, one side smiling, and the other side frowning. However, why is it that these interpretations are mutually exclusive, rather than each holding a partial and incomplete truth of their own? In this paper, then, I argue that the freeter is neither the galavanting iconoclast nor the somber cynic full of ennui, but, paradoxically, both at the same time.

Review

Amidst Japan Sink, Shrink, and Pink, Driscoll argues that freeters have laid claim to a moral condemnation they do not deserve. While "freeter-positives emphasize that young people actively choose part-time work because they do not want to live their lives tied to a company," " freeter-negatives similarly emphasize the ways in which freeters 'freely choose' their lifestyles and are 'personally responsible' for both their own declining economic fortunes and Japan's" (Driscoll 2007:175-176). However, Driscoll argues that what is missing is the a "structural analysis of the shifting modes of exploitation of wage laborers," where freeters can be seen as "Marx's Industrial Reserve Army, who can be 'used up and thrown away.'"

Lukacs carries this argument about the lack of a structural analysis into the media in an analysis of workplace dramas. Here, Lukacs (13) notes, "Many top-ranking trendy dramas such as Long Vacation or Beach Boys have glamorized the freeters' flexible lifestyle and iconoclastic, anti-salaryman attitude." On the other hand, sociologist Yamada Masahiro argues that freeters are "weak-willed, lacking in ambition, irresponsible, spoiled, and self-absorbed" (Lukacs 14). Yet, Lukacs argues that, "without situating the freeter phenomenon in the context of the economic slowdown that contributed to the emergence of this social trend," both perspectives are pointless, especially since "it is not only that in Japan young people do not want to sacrifice their lives to their companies; they decreasingly have the opportunity to do so."

Finally, Genda takes on one remaining explanation for the rise in youth unemployment – the "parasite single." As Yamada Masahiro (in Genda 2005:30), who I mentioned above, explains, "A parasite single is 'an unmarried child who lives with his/her parents even after graduation and is dependent on them for his/her basic living conditions.'" Yamada argues that these "parasite singles" maintain their high standard of living by staying with their parents whom they are dependent on, in turn contributing to later marriages and the decline in the birthrate. Worst of all, these "parasite singles" "have no need to look for a high-paying job and instead take a dilettante-ish attitude toward work" (Genda 2005:32). Against this, after analyzing data that shows tenure has remained the same for young workers while it has increased for older workers, Genda (2005:43) argues that it is instead the older workers who are the true "parasites": "Contrary to the belief that parasite singles enjoy the vested right to live at their parents' expense, the real parasites are the parents, the generation of middle-aged and older workers on whom society has conferred vested rights and who make their livelihood at the expense of young people."

Discussion

Driscoll, Lukacs, and Genda all acknowledge the (somewhat, in the case of Genda) positive image of the freeter (who I am conflating with the "parasite

single" for the purposes of this paper) as someone who has found a way to escape the clutches of the corporation to live a spirited existence outside its bounds. However, they also argue that this image floats in a space that is bereft of any sense of the structural conditions that have contributed to the existence of the freeter, where they instead represent "Marx's Industrial Reserve Army" in the midst of an economic slowdown without even the opportunity to sacrifice themselves and parasitic older workers who increase the difficulty they face in finding a job.

I argue, though, that while it very well may be the case that there are a host of structural conditions that have contributed to the existence of the freeter, this does not necessarily undermine the escapist allure of the space they occupy. Perhaps freeters did not "choose" the conditions under which they live, but that does not mean that those who have "sacrificed" themselves do not look upon them with a sense of jealousy that cannot be ignored, the same way many long for the life of an artist, despite the knowledge of how difficult and risky such a life can be.

Conclusion

Somewhere between Marxist exploitation and perhaps a Foucaultian aesthetics of existence I hope there is room for the freeter to wear both masks rather than opting for one or the other. Even though the freeter has emerged from dire conditions, humans can be amazingly creative and adaptive beings, and sometimes the greatest beauty can emerge from the darkest hours. Either way, I do not believe it will be possible to work through this neoliberal moment unless the "advantages" that have emerged as a result of neoliberal globalization are taken seriously rather than simply being regarded as the result of false consciousness.

Response Paper #4:

Response Paper #4

Berry, Chris and Fran Martin. 2003. Syncretism and Synchronicity: Queer and Asian Cyberspace in 1990s Taiwan and Korea. In Chris Berry, Fran Martin, and Audrey Yuh, eds/ *Mobile Cultures*. Durham: Duke University Press. Pp. 87-114.

Tom T. Ahonen & Jim O'Reily. Introduction and Digital Youth. In Digital Korea: Convergence of Broadband Internet, 3G Cell Phones, Multiplayer Gaming, Digital TV, Virtual Reality, Electronic Cash, Telematics, Robotics, E-Government and the Intelligent Home (Future Text, 2007). Pp. 1-35.

Chan, Dean. 2006. Negotiating Intra-Asian Games Networks: On Cultural Proximity, East Asian Games Design, and Chinese Farmers. *Fibreculture:*

Internet Theory/Criticism/Research.8:1-12

Computer-Mediated Communications and the Warping of Space and Time in Korea and China

Globalization is typically described, à la Harvey, as the compression of space and time. However, I argue that this is too linear an assessment, and globalization should be considered to be a warping of space and time. In particular, amidst this warping of space and time, while place may be destabilized and emerge in new ways, global flows do not override the importance of local space, as some have argued. In support of this argument I draw upon examples of the use of information and communications technology in Korea and China that highlight the significance of proximate space.

Computer-Mediated Communication in Korea and China

Berry and Martin (2003) contend with the notion of "global queering" in the context of Taiwan and Korea. In response to Altman's (and Morton's) argument that gay subjectivities from the West overpower non-Western gay subjectivities in an imperialistic manner, Berry and Martin propose that this process instead manifests as a one of "syncretization." Important to my argument, however, is the example that Berry and Martin (2003:102) give of a Korean student who "posted a message when he was living in a small college town asking if there was anyone online from the same town," which led to the formation of a group that "met to see a movie and then began more regular social activities." Thus, far from computer-mediated communication leading to an emphasis on the global, it was instead used, in this instance at least, to form local ties.

Ahonen and O'Reilly (2007) use the example of South Korea, which is the country that is the most saturated with the use of computer-mediated communications, to highlight the forms of sociality that have emerged from the concentrated use of information and communications technology. Ahonen and O'Reilly succinctly capture the effect of ubiquitous access to mobile communications by giving this group of youth the moniker Generation-C, or the Community Generation. As Ahonen and O'Reilly (2007:19-20) say, "This generation is accustomed to living experiences together with mates, not in isolation." With respect to my argument, though, an important moment appears when Ahonen and O'Reilly describe youth openly sharing their phones with each other, exchanging comments about text messages they have sent and received. Here, then, these devices for mobile communications function to create a space that relies upon proximate access to friends in physical space.

Finally, Chan (2006) describes the effects of regionalization in computer games intended for an East Asian market, as well as the specter of racism surrounding Chinese gold farmers. Regarding regionalization, Chan argues against a

homogenizing effect, saying, "Asianness is crucially not mobilised as a singular and unchanging referent. Instead, the plurality of Asian audiences is tacitly underscored in intra-Asian games localisation." An important moment for my argument can be found where he describes players meeting together in a single Internet café to organize missions inside the game Lineage. Here again the importance of proximate space is highlighted, where computer-mediated communications contribute to rather than deter or destabilize their formation.

Discussion

One fear of computer-mediated communications is that they will lead to isolation and destroy the fragile and remaining social ties that we have with each other. Along these same lines some hold that computer-mediated communication leads to a shift away from the importance of proximate physical space, such that individuals maintain ties with others across space, when, of course, they are not in solitude. The examples that I have drawn upon above, however, support my argument that this is not the case. Instead, rather than destabilize and destroy the importance of space, computer-mediated communications help to raise the value of proximate space in certain instances.

Conclusion

I have argued that rather than doing away with the importance of space, computer-mediated communications instead helps to contribute to its importance. This, then, argues for a warping of space and time rather than a simple compression. In other words, it is not the case that the world has become smaller in a linear fashion, but that while the world may have become smaller in a general sense, space and time have become warped such that some points have become much closer in relation to others. This is analogous to Sassen's argument that certain global cities have more in common with each other than cities nearby these global cities.

A crucial aspect of this warping can be found in Ahonen and O'Reilly's (2007:27) argument that youths "need to be divided into even-smaller subgroups and microsegments." This invites questions as to how we interpret subjectivities, and call for a possible engagement with micro-subjectivites, where individuals are part of multiple overlapping and interconnected rhizomatic networks that are radically local (e.g., speech or dialect vs. language), all of which is facilitated by the proliferation of computer-mediated communications and information and communications technology.

Response Paper #5: I met Chao outside Sherman Hall and took him to my dorm room. Briefly, before the interview, I found the ethnographic gaze reversed as he asked about the meaning behind my Hieronymus Bosch print and small figure of a skull-faced man in a red suit. All I could say was that I like weird things.

Chao is studying computer science, and this is his first year at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, but his second year in the United States -- he transferred from another university. Chao grew up in the northern part of China, but his undergraduate university was near Shanghai.

When I asked Chao what city he plans to work in after he graduates, he said he plans to return to China. When I asked why that would be best for him, he said, "I have family there, and if you can do something you like, it's not a big deal where you do it."

"So you think you can have just as much opportunity in China?"

"Yes, I think so."

"Do you think that you would have returned to China regardless? Even if the economy wasn't so good?"

"I think so, mainly because I have family there."

"When you look for a job, which would you say is more important to you…"

"I think the very first item in that job should be interest. Whether you are interested in that job, that is very important. And the second one is also, if you can do it well, what kind of influence you can make, or what kind of impact you can make."

"But would you say it's more important to find a job you enjoy versus one that has a high salary?"

"I don't think salary is a big problem. If the salary is okay, that's fine."

"Do you have any plans to start a business after you graduate?"

"Not within a short time, because when you're a student you don't have that much money to start with."

"But maybe in the future?"

"Maybe. (Laughter.) Who knows?"

"This might be a strange question. Do you think it would be better for China if you return?"

"Be better for China? I have no idea, because we have a lot of students, so different people they may have different choices. If I return, I'm not sure. Of course, now, the world is quite open. People choose to go abroad, and people

may stay abroad. They may choose to do that, or they may choose to go back. So maybe, I don't know, different behaviors may have different impact on their country. But you know, there's a lot of people. Some American people, they also work in China. And some Chinese people work in America."

"Is this ever something you consider when you think about your plans for after you graduate?"

"Not much."

Chao said that, regarding food and media, he would be fine in a metropolitan area, because there would be many choices. When I asked if he meant both the United States and China, he said, "If I live in China I will feel more comfortable maybe, because I'm quite familiar with what's there. But if I, for whatever reason, have to stay in the United States, it could still be fine for me."

"Would this town be big enough?"

"This town is not ideal, but this town is fine, because this town still has a lot of choices."

When I asked Chao if he thought that he would be better off than his parents, he said, "I think we are all better than the last generation, because the world is moving forward everyday."

I asked Chao if he planned to support his parents after he graduates, and when he said yes I asked if that was also part of the reason he wanted to live in China, he said yes to this as well.

"I think it's part of the cultural difference. Here, I don't know if it's true, but it's a feeling that if you go independent, you are independent. But in China, if you go independent, you are still maybe supported by your parents, and they are likely to support you with whatever they have, and you are likely to support them back if they are old. It's part of our culture. It's quite different I must say."

Chao is an only child, and while he plans to get married, this doesn't have an influence on his plans to return to China.

In an attempt to probe deeper, I asked Chao, "Have you considered at all staying here in the United States after you graduate?"

"I prefer to live with my parents, but if there's something really really interesting to me. Maybe to work with a group of super-brilliant people here, and we can really make something that is super fantastic. For example, you can benefit all human beings, or some new theory or new type of machine. I could consider maybe. If you can really work with Einstein, it doesn't matter where you are.

Because those kind of people belong to the whole human nation, I mean human beings. And if you can work with them, or you can have mutual help, mutual benefit to each other, maybe you can develop something that can really really benefit the whole world."

It is clear that Chao's main reason for returning to China is his family. It is also significant that Chao said he would return to China because of his family even if China's economy was not doing so well. The only other reason that Chao implicitly gave for returning to China was its familiarity. Contributing to China did not figure into Chao's plans at all.

On these grounds, then, Chao does not appear as a "patriotic professional." However, in explicitly drawing attention to the importance of finding a job that he is personally interested in, he does bear the mark of a neoliberal subject. Though, I argue that it is important to dwell upon the relationship between the self-interested nature of valuing family and an enjoyable job. While many might be tempted to see valuing one's family as a social act, it is important to make salient the way in which this can be an act of self-interest as well.

Finally, it is interesting to note the brief presence of a global cosmopolitan order, where the ultimate achievement for Chao would be to produce something that would benefit all humans. Here again there is a strange tension between Chao's self-interest and other-interest, though I am unable to conjure up terms that would adequately capture this situation.

Response Paper #6:

Response Paper #7:

Preliminary Question:

The inquiry that guides my project consists of two parts. First, I am interested in discerning the meanings, practices, and performances that are associated with neoliberal subjectivities. Second, I am concerned with the ways in which these meanings, practices, and performances secretly invoke and evoke, and are coded for, a masculine subjectivity, in as much as they are associated with an oftentimes assertive and aggressive sensibility.

To examine these questions I intend to observe and interview members of the Chinese Entrepreneur and Professional Club (CEPC) here at the University of Illinois. On the one hand, I will attend to the gender makeup of the group, and the ways in which notions of masculinity and femininity are mobilized. And on the other, I will attend to the ways in which this group is part of a larger network of global capitalism, composed of the Academy for Entrepreneurial Leadership here at the University of Illinois, as well as China, which raises questions about

the influences that go into the relationship between neoliberalism and nationality.

Entrepreneurship at the University of Illinois - http://www.uiuc.edu/entrepreneur/

The Academy for Entrepreneurial Leadership - http://www.business.uiuc.edu/ael/

Chinese Entrepreneur and Professional Club - https://netfiles.uiuc.edu/ro/www/ChineseEntrepreneurandProfessionalClub/

Interview/Observ. #1: I met Wei at his apartment complex. He found a place for us to sit inside the complex and I set up my audio mixer and microphones to record our interview. Wei was born in 1980 and this is his first year here in the United States and at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign as a graduate student in economics.

Wei said he plans to be a professor in the United States after he gets his PhD for five to ten years, and then go back to China.

"So what would you want to accomplish here in the United States before going back to China?"

"I want to come up with some theory or explain some economic phenomenon. I hope I can have my own ideas about my research field. And then I will go back to China. I hope my ideas can help Chinese economic rules. That is also my goal to study here. That is why I study here."

"So you want to do something that you're able to contribute back to…"

"Yeah, right."

"So that's part of the reason that you're here in the United States?"

"Yeah, a very important reason. Or, the main reason."

I asked Wei if he would consider staying in the United States, and he said, "China is my country. It is where I will spend the rest of my time."

I then asked Wei if he would considering staying in the United States if he found a job that offered a lot more money than a in China, and he said, "Well, your exception is not real, actually, I think. Because if you are excellent you will find many many good opportunities in every place. Of course I will I choose the place where I can contribute most."

"Contribute most to China?", I asked.

"I think I will contribute to economics," said Wei, "And then contribute to China. I think this is the order."

"Which would you say is more important? Contributing to economics or contributing to China?"

"I think these two things do not conflict."

"So you can do both?"

"Yeah, because you see, if I contribute to economics, my contribution can also apply in China, because it is universal to any country."

I asked Wei if he thought his life would be better than it was for his parents, and he said that he would certainly make more money, but that it was hard to compare, because they have their own interests. Wei doesn't have any siblings, referring to the one child policy in China when I asked.

When I asked how important it was to get married, he said, "Of course, it is very important. To find someone to share my success. To have each other. To go in the future road. I think it is very very important to go along with me." Wei has a girlfriend now, who he plans to marry, so finding someone to be with does not currently have any influence on his decision to return to China.

I asked Wei if he plans to support his parents when he finishes his PhD and gets a job, and he said, "Of course. Even now I give my parents money, because it is a tradition in China."

Wei said that China is getting better and better, in terms of living and jobs, and when I asked if this was the reason that students were now returning to China instead of staying in the United States, he said, "Maybe it is an important reason – China is getting better and better – for me to go back to China, because it means it is more suitable for living and working."

"So do you think that in the past you might have decided instead to stay in the United States?"

"Maybe."

I wanted to know more about where Wei was from, Fujian, and when I asked about his hometown, he said it was a "middle city," "a good place to work in and live in," "smaller than Shanghai or Beijing, but better than the middle part of China."

Wei said that the program he is in was very competitive, but because he has a

personal interest in economics this gives him an edge over those who are not as personally motivated. "Because I have an interest," said Wei, "I don't feel tired. I try my best and use all my strength to do this."

I asked Wei where he though this interest came from, and he said, "When I was an undergraduate in my second year I just wanted to finish my courses and become a math teacher. But then I became really interested in economic phenomena, such as the stock market, because my mother bought some stock. So, I just wondered, why does the price go up and down? And then I still went on. Why can't some people find jobs? Why can some people earn a lot of money? Why is America economically better than China? Why? So far it is very interesting, and I want to find the law behind these phenomena."

Finally, Wei said he recognizes that this is a special time for China in its transition from a "planned economy" to a "market economy," and that it is a transition he can take part in. Wei also recognizes that there are a lot of people in China who are living in poverty, and if he can help them then it will increase their "satisfaction."

Here in Wei's interview I could see glimpses of Hanser's (2002) "Chinese enterprising self," where Wei thinks that "if you are excellent you will find many many good opportunities in every place" and is driven by a personal interest that keeps him from getting tired. But I could also see Hoffman's (2006) "patriotic professional," where Wei sought to educate himself in the United States so that he could in turn help his country of China do better.

One piece of the equation that is missing so far in my research, however, is the role that the improved conditions in China play for the "Chinese enterprising self" who is at the same time a "patriotic professional." In other words, is the "patriotic professional" predicated on the recently improved living and economic conditions in China? And if not, then how did those Chinese students who chose to stay in the United States after graduating contribute back to China, or did they?

Hoffman, Lisa. 2006. Autonomous choices and patriotic professionalism: On governmentality in late-socialist China. Economy and Society , 35: 4: 550-570.

Amy Hanser. 2002. The Chinese Enterprising Self: Young Educated Urbanites and the Search for Work. Hirsch, Jerrold Link et al. China Popular. Lanhan, MD: Rowman and Littlefield. Pp. 189-206.

Group Research Question: 2008-03-24

It has recently been reported that, as a result of economic improvement, more Chinese students are returning to China after studying abroad than before, e.g. http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2008-01/17/content_7436298.htm. Drawing

on this shift, for our project we will examine the set of meanings that Chinese students mobilize when deciding whether or not to return to China. This will allow us to distinguish the effect that improved economic conditions in China have had on Chinese students' sense of nationalism and neoliberalism. We are specifically focusing on Chinese graduate students in the sciences or engineering, because, we argue, these fields' proximity to capital make them particularly sensitive to economic influences. We are also focusing on straight cisgender graduate students who are men, in part to minimize the diluting effect that including women or LGBTQ persons would have on our data, but also, we argue, because gender exerts enough of an influence that there is a discernably different, though overlapping, logic for each of these subject positions, as we have already seen in initial interviews.

Here are the questions we have so far, which address money, personal fulfillment, family, marriage, nationalism, and preferences in food and media.

How long have you been a student here at UIUC?

What are you studying?

How long have you been in the United States?

What do you plan to do after you graduate?

What city would you like to work in after you graduate?

Have you considered returning to China after you graduate?

Which kind of job is more important to you, one with a high salary or one that you enjoy? (This gets at the emphasis on "personal fulfilment" that we have encountered in our readings.)

Do you have any plans to start a business after you graduate? (This gets at their relation to the neoliberal "enterprising self.")

Do you think it would be better for China if you return? Why? Why not? Does this influence your plans for after you graduate? How so? (Nationalism.)

How important are the kinds of food, movies, television, books, and magazines you will be able to access to your plans for after you graduate? (Preferences.)

Do you think you will be better off than your parents were? (This gets at both the socioeconomic position of their parents as well as their sense of the changes that have taken place.)

Do you plan to support your parents? Does this influence where you would like

to work after you graduate? How important is it to live near your parents? (Filial piety.)

Do you have any siblings? (Ideally this also lets us get at the socioeconomic position of their parents.)

Have you considered whether you would like to get married? Does this influence your plans for after you graduate? (This is just an attempt to get at some of the factors that might influence their plans, and also connects to some of the moments in our readings where men were more interested in their career than in marriage.)

2008-03-03

For our project we are positing that there has been a historical shift in that Chinese grad students are now returning to China after they finish rather than staying here in the United states, and we want to know why. We are specifically focusing on Chinese grad students in the sciences or engineering.

Here are the questions we have so far, which address money, personal fulfillment, family, marriage, nationalism, and preference.

Do you plan to go back to China? Why?

How important is salary to your decision?

How important is it to get a job that is personally fulfilling?

Do you think you will be better off than your parents were?

Do you have any siblings?

Are you married? Do you think it would be easier to get married in China? How does that affect your decision?

Do you plan to support your family?

Would you like to be closer to your family?

Do you think it is better for China if you return? Or is this important?

If you decided to stay in America do you think you would miss China? Why?

EUI Links: EUI connection:

http://hdl.handle.net/2142/1815

For this project Barber researched the way in which racial barriers exist between students on campus. In this regards Barber did find that there are real barriers to co-involvement between the various "racial" groups on campus. This project also allows for some insight into the experiences of Asian students on campus, which would include the Chinese graduate science and engineering students that we are interested in for our own project. For example, Barber (2) points to the fact that Asian students are often stereotyped as engineers. Regarding racism, one Asian student said, "Black people see me and think that I am lucky because I don't have to confront the overt racism as much as they do. But I do confront it. I am conflicted because I know that I am a minority and the history of my people in this country is painted with overt discrimination too. But to another extent I am grateful that white people see me as better. Not better than Black people, but better; more tolerable" (Barber 16). Anecdotally, Barber (16) also said, "I have overheard conversations where Black people make fun of Asians and mock them partially because of the ability to be seen as more intelligent, less dependent on government intervention via financial aid, and the likely hood of assimilation." Thus, it is important to be conscious of both the stereotypes that adhere to Asian students on campus as well as the tensions they experience with other students on account of these stereotypes.

Interview/Observ. #2: Cell phone at my ear and consent forms in hand, I waited in the entryway for Jun to let me into the building. Tall, with a youthful, smiling face, Jun led me into the building and we found a place to conduct the interview.

As we went over the consent forms Jun asked, "Can you explain to me, what's ethnography?" I laughed and said, "It's actually a big question." I explained that it is one of the main ways that people do anthropology, and that it meant going to a certain place for a long time and talking to people. I also explained that it was simply another way of doing research, as opposed to surveys or questionnaires. Finally, I explained that while other researchers might also do interviews, what made ethnographic interviews different was that it was more of a dialogue or conversation, where the ethnographer tries to understand someone else's experience of the world.

Jun, who is in his early twenties, said this is his first year studying biology at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Before coming to Champaign Jun was in China, and this is the first time that he has been to the United States.

Jun plans to get his PhD in five years, do one or two rounds of a postdoctoral position, and then get a faculty position in the United States. Jun pointed out, though, that this all depends on how he does as a PhD student, and if he is unable to go through with his plans then he will either get a job "in the industry" or go back to China.

I asked Jun if he had considered what city he would like to work in, and he said

the university is more important than the city, which he might consider when it is time for him to retire, but not until then.

Jun did say that he prefers to get a faculty position in the United States. "Here you have more opportunities to talk with other scientists, to collaborate with them, to hear first class seminars," he said. Jun did make clear, however, that there are some Chinese scientists who have faculty positions in both the United States and China, and split their time between the two countries.

When I asked Jun whether he preferred a job with a high salary or one that he enjoyed personally, he said it would depend on his future wife. "If in one city I can find a good job, but my wife can't," he said, "Then I will not choose this position." Jun also said that a high salary job typically means that you have to spend a lot of time at work away from your family, so if his wife can also get a good job, then he won't need to choose a high salary job. I asked Jun if he thought that the family was the most important thing to consider, and he nodded his head yes.

As for starting his own business, Jun said he has no interest in doing so. When I asked why that was, Jun had a clear answer: "I don't like business."

I laughed and asked, "What do you mean by that?"

"If I cannot get a faculty position, then I would prefer to stay in a lab, whether it is a lab for a biomedical company – that's the life that I like. Not working with money. (Laughter.) I just don't like that."

"What is it that you don't like about it?"

"I don't know. I think I just prefer to do some experiments."

It took me moment to explain what I wanted to know when I asked Jun if he ever considered whether or not it would be better for China if he returned after graduating. Eventually, Jun explained, "If I can get a faculty position here, then I think I will go back to China at least once a year. Furthermore, I will spend half a year in China to teach a course for undergrad students. Then I think I will invite my scientist friends to give seminars. I think it's really a good thing for you. Even if you have a faculty position in America, it doesn't mean that you will not do anything for your country. I think still there are many chances for me to work for my country. And actually I think this will be better than if I am just in China and don't have much contact with the American scientists. This is actually a typical way for many Chinese scientists."

Jun quickly answered no when I started to ask if he ever considered things such as food, movies, television, and magazines when planning his future. "I don't watch movies, and I think everywhere television programs are sort of the same.

Food I mainly cook by myself."

I asked Jun if he thought his life would be better than his parents', and he said, "It's really complicated for you to compare one person's life to another person's. It's really difficult for you to define whose life is better."

In addition to supporting his parents, Jun, who is an only child, hopes to live close to them, because "they are old and they need care," and so he will try to bring them to the United States. Jun said that his mother doesn't speak English very well, so he will try to find a city with other Chinese people for them to interact with, "otherwise they will feel alone."

"How important will it be for you to live in a place where there are Chinese people?", I asked.

"I think it's not very important."

I wanted to know if finding someone to marry came to bear on Jun's plans, but he said that he has a girlfriend, who he met as an undergrad in China.

Similar to my previous interview, Jun did find it important to make a contribution back to China. However, unlike in my previous interview, he did not find the need to live in China to make this contribution, though he did plan to split his time between the United States and China.

The characteristic that was most noticeably different from my previous interview was that Jun did not carry himself with the same sense of drive and "excellence." Also noticeably different was his aversion to business or working with money.

Here, then, Jun bears the mark of patriotism (as well as filial piety), but he cannot be said to be a "patriotic professional" nor an "enterprising self," which provides insight into the spectrum of subjectivities that constitute Chinese grad students in the sciences and engineering.

Group Summary: For our project we have sought to learn the meanings that male Chinese graduate students in the sciences and engineering at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign mobilize when making plans for the future, with particular regards to the country they plan to work in. We were motivated to pursue this question after sensing that students here at the University of Illinois are deciding to return to China in greater numbers than in previous cohorts. This intuition has been reflected in our interviews, where these students consider family, nation, and economy, when planning their futures. Though we do not address them here, these students also consider pride, food, and friends when making their plans.

The most prominent reason for returning to China that emerged from our interviews is simply that economic conditions in China have improved in recent years and are expected to continue improving in the years to come. Thomas (who is actually an economist) said he believes students are returning to China because "China is getting better and better," and when we asked him if he might have decided to stay in the United States in the past instead of return he said, "Maybe."

However, these students also place heavy consideration on family when making plans for the future. Dan said, " I think it is best to live with my family in the future." Consideration of family, though, does not always result in the need to return to China. Jing, who does not plan to return to China, intends to bring his parents to the United States.

Finally, another point that these students consider when making plans for the future is the contribution they will make to China. As James said, without explicit prompting, "First, I will return for my parents, second, for China, and third for my girlfriend and I." Again, though, it is not necessary for students to return to China in order to make a contribution to their country. Jing highlighted this when he said, "Even if you have a faculty position in America, it doesn't mean that you will not do anything for your country," and in drawing attention to the opportunities that are available for scientists in his field he opened the possibility that someone could produce a greater contribution to China by not returning.

Paper: Family, Food, Nation, and Economy: Attachment to China and the Return (or Not) of Chinese Graduate Students in the Sciences and Engineering

Our project began with the anecdotal observation of a group member, Sasha, who noticed that more Chinese graduate students appear to be returning to China after they graduate than before. Thus, to get at the meanings that Chinese graduate students mobilize when making plans for after they graduate, we interviewed eight male students in the sciences and engineering. From these interviews we found that these students consider family, food, nation, and economy when making their decision. In particular, our interviews point to a greater openness towards returning to China as a result of its improved economy and living conditions. However, I argue that rather than interpret this as a situation where more students are returning to China simply because its economy has improved, it is instead the case that now that China's economy is similar to that of the United States, these graduate students are able to consider other factors when making plans for after they graduate.

Research Background

China's "Reverse Brain Drain"

In support of our group member Sasha's anecdotal observation that more Chinese graduate students appear to be returning to China after they graduate, various news and journal articles have reported an increase in the number of Chinese students that are returning to China after studying abroad. As one news article plainly puts it, "A growing number of Chinese are returning to work at home after studying abroad thanks to the country's booming economic growth" (Y. Wang 2008). Another article reports that, according to the Ministry of Education, 44,000 Chinese students returned from study abroad in 2007, up 4.79 percent from 2006 (H. Wang 2008). Unfortunately, the same article reports that 144,000 Chinese went to study abroad in 2007, up 7.94 percent from 2006, which makes it difficult to discern the relationship between the increased number of students returning to China and the increased number of Chinese students who are studying abroad.

In addition to reports on the number of Chinese students who have returned to China from study abroad, surveys have also shown a desire to return. For example, a 2000 article reports, "The latest official survey shows that 80 percent of Chinese students now studying abroad will return to their homeland to start a career" (80 Percent 2000). A 2004 article reports that 34.5 percent of the Chinese students studying abroad that they surveyed "wish to return as soon as they complete their study," while 54.1 percent "plan to return after gaining some work experience" (Most Chinese 2004).

Academic literature, treating this as an issue of "brain drain," reports similar information. Saxenian (2005:36), writing about both China and India, says, "This paper argues that the same individuals who left their home countries for better lifestyles abroad are now reversing the brain drain, transforming it into 'brain circulation' as they return home to establish business relationships or to start new companies while maintaining their social and professional ties to the United States." Zweig, Chung, and Vanhonacker (2006:468) say, "Technology is driving the reverse migration currently under way in China," where those who return to China with technological advancements after studying abroad are rewarded with better housing and faster promotions, among other enticements (Zweig, Chung, and Vanhonacker 2006:454).

Neoliberal Chinese Subjects

Aside from the issue of Chinese students returning to China after studying abroad, recent literature has also detailed the effect that neoliberal capitalism has had on Chinese students. Hanser (2002:191-192) explains that, while "work was subject to extensive government control" in China from the 1950s to the 1970s, market reforms led to increased competition among workers in the 1980s and 1990s. Hanser (2002:190) further explains that these market reforms led to the emergence of Chinese enterprising selves, that, following Rose, are predicated on autonomy, personal fulfillment, and choice. Hoffman (2006:552) adds further nuance to the Chinese enterprising self by arguing for the existence of patriotic

professionals. These subjects, she argues, do embrace neoliberalism as enterprising selves, but also echo "Maoist demands for service to the nation and duty to one's fellow citizen[s]" (Hoffman 2006:560).

Mode of Inquiry

To gain some insight into the meanings that Chinese graduate students mobilize when making plans for after they graduate, we decided to interview male graduate students in the sciences and engineering. We decided to interview graduate students in the sciences and engineering because we felt that these students would bare the most visible impact of neoliberal capitalism, given the close relationship that the sciences and engineering have with global capital. We also decided to focus on men after relatively stark gender differences with respect to "patriotic professionalism" appeared in our initial interviews of both male and female graduate students. In short, it appeared that the men we interviewed embraced "patriotic professionalism" to a greater degree than did the women, so we decided to focus on men to reduce incongruencies we would be unable to account for in such a limited set of data.

In all, we interviewed twelve students, but I only draw on eight of those interviews here. Two of the twelve interviews we conducted were of women, whom I excluded for reasons described above. The other two interviews that I exclude were of economics students, and I exclude them because they do not fit into our focus on the sciences and engineering. As I understand it, these interviews were the simple result of miscommunication among the members of my group and our research participants. The men we interviewed are identified using pseudonyms, though Sarah's second interview and Sasha's first interview do not name their research participants, so I have named them "Jie" and "Yong" respectively.

In our interview questions (appendix A) we attempted to cover a broad range of issues. First, we asked our research participants about their plans for after graduation, to see what country they planned to reside in. Next, to discern the presence of neoliberal values, we asked our research participants whether they valued a high salary or personal fulfillment more, and whether they planned to start a business. We then asked our research participants if they thought it would be better for China if they were to return, to get a sense of their "patriotic professionalism." We also asked about the importance of "mundane" issues such as food, movies, television, books, and magazines, to discern the influence of cultural affinity; whether they thought they would be better off than their parents and whether they had any siblings, to get at their socioeconomic background; whether they planned to support their parents, to discern the influence of filial piety; and whether they had considered marriage, to get at any remaining factors related to their decision to return to China that we could think of.

Research Results

Out of the eight male graduate students we interviewed, who were all in their first or second year here at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, all but one planned to return to China, though one other student seemed unsure about his plans. However, those who did plan to return to China did not necessarily plan to do so immediately. Before returning to China Dan, Matt, and Steve said they planned to work in the United States for three to five, five to ten, and one to two years, respectively. It is possible that the others who did not specify working in the United States for a set period of time before returning to China may have had similar plans.

One of the primary reasons these students gave for returning to China, which four research participants referred to as a factor in their plans, was family. For example, Dan said, "I think it is best to live with my family in the future." For many of these students, however, it was not simply that they wanted to be near their parents, but that they wanted to be near their parents so they could better care for them. Jie said he wanted to be close to his parents because they will need his support as they grow older. Similarly, when asked why he planned to return to China, Yong said, "The major reason is that I am the only child in my family, [and] when my parents get older I have a responsibility to take care of them." However, while Jun, the one student who did not plan to return to China, also planned to support his parents, he intended to bring his parents to the United States, so caring for one's parents does not necessarily require that one return to China.

Another important reason given for returning to China was culinary affinity. Jie said that China would be the best choice, because he is "familiar with the culture and especially the food." Dan said, "Life is not as good here as it is in China. The food here is terrible, so I am learning to cook." On the other hand, Jun, who did not plan to return, did not consider food to be important, saying, "Food I mainly cook by myself."

Yet another factor that these students considered was the contribution they would make to their nation, reflecting Hoffman's "patriotic professionals." When asked if he thought it would be better for China if he returned, Jie said, "Yeah, sure, I do." However, Jie asserted that he would have to develop himself as an individual before he would be able to contribute to China. Matt also considered the contribution he might make to China, but explicitly pointed out that this was second to his personal plans, saying, "I think the first thing for me is my plan, my own schedule, my own career path." James considered China too, but, like the others, it was not his first consideration: "First, I will return for my parents, second, for China, and third for my girlfriend and I." Lastly, while Jun did not plan to return to China, he did plan to make yearly trips to China to teach courses for undergrad students. Steve also argued that it was possible for others to stay in the United States and still make a contribution to China. Thus, similar to family, a desire to contribute back to China did not necessitate a return to China.

Finally, China's economy also played a role in the plans the students made for after they graduate. Unfortunately, we did not make it a standard part of our instrument to ask all of the research participants whether they would still have returned to China even if its economy were not doing so well. So, for example, we only know that Chao said he would have returned to China for his family even if its economy was not getting better. We also only know that Steve said it would have been pointless to return to China if its economy were not so good, because then he would not be able to make a contribution to his country. However, our research participants' answers to our question about salary and interest were revealing. Four of our research participants said that they would rather find a job they were interested in with a moderate salary rather than take a job that they were not interested in with a high salary. This means that even moderate improvements in the salaries for jobs in China could have an incredible effect on the number of students who return from study abroad. The stance of these men, who privilege personal fulfillment above salary, also runs parallel to research on contemporary Chinese subjectivities more generally, which Rofel (2007:119) partially captures in one woman's quote who said, "[My mother's generation] would sacrifice for others before doing something for themselves. Our generation is more selfish." Of course, while this is complicated by the fact that we interviewed men and Rofel was speaking to women, it does present an entry point for considering the incredibly complex way in which "selfishness" can operate, especially since many of the men we spoke to also plan to care for their parents.

Discussion

In our research on the meanings that are mobilized by male Chinese grad students in the sciences and engineering when making plans for the future we have found that family, food, nation, and economy are all important points that they consider. However, knowing this, we are still presented with a relatively complex pattern of decisions. The vast majority of our research participants considered family to be an important component of their return to China, yet Jun planned to bring his parents to the United States. Our research participants also cited food as one of the motivations behind their return to China, yet Jun said he made his own food. Our research participants also drew attention to the contribution they planned to make to China as a component of their return to China, yet Jun planned to contribute to China while residing in the United States. Finally, our research participants faintly pointed to the importance of China's improved economy in their decision to return to China, yet this did not appear to be a concern for Jun. The only difference, then, between Jun and the others that might lead to them desiring to return to China while he did not appears to be a simple affinity for China, which they seemed to share though he did not.

I do argue, however, that the return of these students is predicated on improvements in China's economy (except, perhaps, for Chao). This is not to

say, though, that students are returning to China in greater numbers simply because the economy is better. Instead, it is likely that improvements and expected growth in China's economy allow these students to reconsider values that they have long held and considered important, but were not their first priority, as shown by the emphasis they placed and family and food.

One other factor to consider is the university itself, though this is a difficult feat to perform. On the one hand, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign exists as one nodal point in a vast network of private and national investments in the sciences and engineering, and global flows of capital. This makes it difficult to say, exactly, how the impact of this university differs from others. On the other hand, though, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign was ranked 5th among graduate engineering programs in the 2008 Best Graduate Schools issue of U.S. News and World (Rankings 2008). Thus, it is possible that the mere ability of these students to be able to choose whether or not they return to China is somehow predicated on the options that are made available to them as a result of attending this university, similar to the "yompies," "young, outwardly mobile professionals," of Hong Kong, who consider themselves to be "global citizens" and rely on networks with other Asians that were "formed through the global networks of higher education," among other sites of interaction (Ong 2007:254).

Along similar lines, I am unable to identify whether or not the individuals we interviewed belong to a particular subgroup at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, which may have lent an additional bias to the data we collected. This is particularly relevant in light of recent tensions surrounding Tibet in China that appear to have caused tensions to emerge among Chinese students studying in the United States as well. Thus, future research on Chinese graduate students at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign could take up this issue, as well as conducting research on female graduate students in the sciences and engineering as well as Chinese graduate students in other disciplines.

Conclusion

On the basis of the set of meanings that male graduate students in the sciences and engineering appear to mobilize, my preliminary conclusion is that there are at least two clusters of these students, and possibly Chinese grad students in general -- those who have an attachment to China and those who do not. Now that the economic conditions between the United States and China are more similar, which are the only two choices our participants seemed to consider, male Chinese grad students in the sciences and engineering are open to consider more personal reasons for returning to China, such as family and food. This shows how considerations of the economy, when making future plans, relate to more "mundane pleasures." More than that, however, it means that these male Chinese grad students in the sciences and engineering can finally go home.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

1.How long have you been a student here at UIUC?

2.What are you studying?

3.How long have you been in the United States?

4.What do you plan to do after you graduate?

5.What city would you like to work in after you graduate?

6.Have you considered returning to China after you graduate?

7.Which kind of job is more important to you, one with a high salary or one that you enjoy?

8.Do you have any plans to start a business after you graduate?

9.Do you think it would be better for China if you return? Why? Why not? Does this influence your plans for after you graduate? How so?

10.How important are the kinds of food, movies, television, books, and magazines you will be able to access to your plans for after you graduate?

11.Do you think you will be better off than your parents were?

12.Do you plan to support your parents? Does this influence where you would like to work after you graduate? How important is it to live near your parents?

13.Do you have any siblings?

14.Have you considered whether you would like to get married? Does this influence your plans for after you graduate?

Reflect: I enjoyed having a chance to engage with collaborative ethnography in this project -- I would not have been able to produce as good of a product without the knowledge and experiences of my collaborators. In turn, this was facilitated by being able to share results with each other so easily through Moodle, such that this highlights some of the essential features that are necessary for engaging in collaborative ethnographic work.

Recommendations: In the spirit of collaborative work, I would enjoy seeing an informal session where those whom we have written about get a chance to respond to the analyses that we have produced. These responses could then become part of the archive itself, as a way of expanding the work that we produce.

Prelim. Research Prop.: Female Chinese Graduate Students in the Sciences and Engineering at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and Competing Values for Family and Nation

According to results of a collaborative pilot research project I participated in on the meanings that male Chinese graduate students in the sciences and engineering mobilize when making their future plans, it appears that an incredible importance is placed on filial piety in these decisions, above and beyond any importance that is placed on China itself. This goes against research that has shown a marked decline in filial values with the rise of a market economy in China (Yan in Fong 2006; Yang in Fuligni and Zhang 2004), as well as research that has shown that Chinese students combine both nationalistic and neoliberal values (Hoffman 2006). Aside from raising questions about the actual state of affairs among Chinese students, the results of my collaborative research project also raise questions about what it is that constitutes China for Chinese students – their family or the state. In turn, the way in which Chinese students conceptualize China is remarkably important since it comes to bear on China's ability to govern its citizens. However, while our research makes the experiences of men visible, it is pertinent that similar research be conducted on the experiences of women. Thus, to gain some insight into the dominant set of meanings that are mobilized when Chinese students think of China, I propose to interview female graduate students in the sciences and engineering at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign regarding the considerations that go into their future plans, similar to previous research I collaboratively conducted but with a different set of goals.

Research Background

One of the primary cultural features that marks China is the existence of filial piety, where children are expected to care for their parents. However, it appears that this value has been affected by China's transition from a planned to a market economy. Yan (in Fong 2006), drawing on his own experiences in an auto-ethnographic fashion and reflecting on his life in rural China from 1949 to 1999, posited that the growth of capitalism was the cause for the erosion of traditional Chinese values such as filial piety. Yang (in Fuligni and Zhang 2004:181), drawing on studies of Chinese attitudes conducted from 1985 on, also argued that there had been "a decline in an emphasis placed on loyalty to family members and obedience." Thus, it would seem to be the case that capitalism, or, more recently, neoliberalism, has had a negative effect, so to speak, on traditional Chinese values such as filial piety.

A peculiar feature regarding filial piety in China is that urban males appear to value it the least. Drawing on the results of a survey of 708 10th and 12th grade students, Filigni and Zhang (2004) found that women in both urban and rural areas were the ones that felt the greatest sense of obligation to their families. Next, were males in rural areas, followed by males in urban areas, who, as I

stated above, felt the least obligation to their families. None of this, however, is to say that any of these individuals did not feel a sense of obligation to their families. It simply highlights the gendered nature of the sense of obligation that is felt by women and men in rural and urban areas.

With respect to nationalism, research has shown that, while China has embraced neoliberal market values, young Chinese citizens still desire to make contributions to China. Drawing on Rose, Hanser (2002:190) argues that the shift from students finding jobs through the government to students finding jobs individual on a competitive basis has resulted in the emergence of a neoliberal "enterprising self" in China. Hoffman (2006:552) expands on the Chinese enterprising self to argue that it exists in a configuration that many conceptualizations of neoliberalism do not address, where it is combined with a concern for the nation.

These two aspects of Chinese experiences, filial piety and nationalism, are relevant to my proposed research project because they present two nodal points for conceiving "China." On the one hand, for some, "China" may be best represented by the kinship ties that they share with family members. Yet for others "China" may be best represented by the ties of citizenship that they share with the nation. Furthermore, it may be the case that these representations are gendered in nature, where women are biased towards conceiving China in terms of their kinship ties, and (urban) men are biased towards conceiving China in terms of their ties of citizenship.

These two aspects are also important because of the way in which obligations towards the family can compete with obligations to the nation. Hu (2000:34) says, "In traditional China, the only powerful unit that competed with the state for loyalty was the family." Though Hu is speaking with regards to traditional China, the (gendered) back and forth that still appears to be taking place between filial piety and nationalism lends support to the importance that filial piety has for the Chinese state's ability to govern its citizens.

For my project I will draw upon the meanings that female Chinese graduate students in the sciences and engineering mobilize when making future plans to address two issues. First, I will use their experiences to articulate the way in which they conceptualize "China." In other words, when these women think of "China," is this thought constituted more by the kinship ties they have with their family or is it constituted more by the ties of citizenship they have with the nation? Second, I will draw upon these women's experiences of China to think through tensions surrounding China's ability to govern its citizens, as the value these women have for their family competes with the value they have for the nation.

Proposed Research

In order to collect ethnographic data for my project, I will interview 8 to 10 Chinese female graduate students in the sciences and engineering at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign over the academic school year from fall of 2008 to spring of 2009. In large part I have chosen this particular group of individuals to complement existing data that has been collected, where men sharing similar characteristics to the above were interviewed. However, to reiterate the logic I relied upon in my previous collaborative research project, I have chosen female graduate students in the sciences and engineering under the assumption that this is the discipline that is influenced the most by the recent growth in neoliberal capitalism, since the sciences and engineering have such a long and intimate relationship with global capital.

As for the interviews themselves, I will rely upon the method of "ethnographic interviewing" (Spradley 1979; Heyl 2001). While I do not intend to interview these women over a long period of time as this method typically entails, I will, however, attend to the meanings that they employ in an attempt to get at their subjective experience of "China." In the spirit of this method, I will also engage these women in an open dialogical manner, rather than a rigid monological fashion. With regards to the questions I will ask, I will rely upon questions that were developed in my previous collaborative research project. Specifically, I will ask these women how important they feel aspects such as familial ties, relationships with friends, attachment to Chinese food, obligations to the state, and China's economic growth are to the plans they make for the future. In addition, I will inquire about these women's backgrounds to discern where they fall on the urban/rural spectrum.

To recruit my research participants I will rely upon a member from my previous collaborative research project to initiate interviews. From this set of initial interviews I will use the "snowball sampling" method (Bernard 2006:192-194) to recruit other participants for this research project. This means that I will ask the women I interview to distribute my contact information to anyone they think might be interested in participating in my project.

Research Significance

It has been argued that the rise of market values in China correlates with the decline of traditional Chinese values such as filial piety. While this is an important issue in itself, this also raises the question of how it is that the rise of market values influences individuals to imagine the nation. In other words, is it the case that individuals make a separation between cultural values and political values, such that asking how these individuals feel about what we assume to be a coherent entity obfuscates this distinction? Thus, along the trajectory of other postmodern fragmentations (and reintegrations), it is important to address the sociocultural coherence that the nation continues to maintain, and pitting filial values against a sense of obligation to the Chinese nation is a way to get at this.

In addition, one aspect that appears to be underdeveloped in existing conceptualizations of neoliberal capitalism is the way in which the enterprising selves that emerge from neoliberalism are gendered subjects. For example, while research has shown that urban and rural women in China have a greater sense of obligation to the family, this has not been developed into a concept that is analogous to the patriotic professional, such as a (gendered) filial professional. Thus, gender should also be a site of inquiry into the effects of neoliberal capitalism, and the values of filial piety among the graduate students I intend to interview is an entry point for getting at this issue.

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